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ABSTRACT

This study examines the attitude of Jewish adolescents in an American metropolis toward the State of Israel. The study is designed to test two hypotheses: (1) that students who are exposed to a more intensive Jewish education tend to be more aware of Israel than those with a lesser exposure; and (2) that children from homes and/or schools with a more markedly Jewish atmosphere tend to feel a stronger tie with Israel. The subjects were 781 last-year students (12-14 years of age) who attended different types of Jewish schools in New York City. The major sources of information for the study included: an attitude questionnaire, a "knowledge of Israel" test, and a short intelligence test. Both hypotheses were supported by the data collected. (Author)

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Attitudes Toward Israel Among American Jewish Adolescents

By Rina Shapira

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ATTITUDES TOWARD ISRAEL AMONG AMERICAN JEWISH ADOLESCENTS

Rina Shapira

Israel and American Jewry

The importance of Israel, as the Jewish homeland and as a symbol uniting Jewish communities throughout the world, is universally recognized in the American Jewish community. But to what extent do American Jews take Israel into account when thinking of and reacting to Jewish issues and in particular to their own Jewishness. "Just in what way for good or ill," asks E. Newman (1959) "is this development [the establishment of the state of Israel] affecting our lives, our status, our thoughts, our mode of life?"

The American Jewish community is divided, organizationally and ideologically, into three major groups—Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. The difference in beliefs among the groups is both religious and cultural. Judaism as a whole may be said to consist of two major components: ethical precepts governing man's relation to God and his fellowman—the "Torah" or Law—and practical precepts concerning ritual observances and man's conduct of his everyday life. The Orthodox adhere strictly to the tenets of both components, in a manner that differs remarkably little from traditional Judaism since the early days of the Jewish dispersion, almost two thousand years ago. Orthodoxy lays considerable stress on the one proper way to observe the practical precepts. Reform Judaism, on the other hand, accentuates the ethical tenets of Judaism, discarding a large part of the ritual precepts and prohibitions. Conservative Judaism falls somewhere between

these two positions. While Conservatism adheres to Judaism's common code of ethics, it has also adopted a modified form of its practical component, with the aim of "conserving" its spirit in accordance with the circumstances of modern life.

As a body, each of these groups has its own attitude toward Israel and the concept of Zionism in general, though the differences are by no means as clearcut as the religious ones. The term "Zion" is traditionally associated with the Biblical past of the Jews when they were settled in their ancient homeland, the land of Israel. Zion epitomizes the notion of the Jews as a people and a national entity. Some eighty years ago, Zionism acquired new significance when it became a political ideal to signify the re-emergence of the Jews as a nation, living in their own land and forming a new society on the basis of their own language, Hebrew. Broadly speaking, Orthodox Judaism regards Zion as an essential element of Judaism. But insofar as the Orthodox subscribe to a belief in messianic redemption, they tend to interpret the "return to Zion" as a matter for divine rather than human intervention. On the other hand, Reform Jewry, maintaining that Judaism, like any other religion, is primarily a set of ethical beliefs, believes accordingly that Jews belong only to the same faith and not to the same people. Conservative Judaism again falls somewhere in the middle: it tends to take a less extreme stand in its understanding of Zion than the Reform or Orthodox groups and acknowledges it as intrinsic to Judaism.

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that in spite of their basic differences, all three groups definitely view themselves as American Jews, and all assert their loyalty, political and cultural, to the American nation. At the same time, the American Jewish effort to further Jewish integration into the American community and its simultaneous effort to retain a Jewish identity and the cultural values of Judaism, are necessarily related to underlying features of the American social structure—and to the basic issue of pluralism in American society.

In general, there is a deliberate attempt on the part of American Jewish schools to take the state of Israel into account as part of their Jewish studies program. A recent study on the foundations, history, and development of American Jewish Day Schools (Hallowitz, 1958), concludes that the basic

aims of American Jewish education, irrespective of ideological differences, are to promote the child's identification with American society as well as with Jews throughout the world, and to instill a high regard for Israel as the Jewish homeland. Similarly, a survey of the American Jewish educational system (Dushkin and Engelman, 1959), which focuses on the aims of the educators, teachers, and parents, also concludes that promoting positive attitudes toward Israel is one of the prime considerations of Jewish education. In addition, Marshall Sklare (1957 and 1960), in his studies of identity and acculturation among Jewish communities, and S. N. Herman (1962), in his study of attitudes of American Jewish students toward Israel, both conclude that Israel is a definite component in American Jewish identification.

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitude of Jewish adolescents in an American metropolis toward the state of Israel. The basic assumption of the study is that such attitudes form one aspect of an adolescent's perception of his own Jewishness. To obtain some sense of the broader context of which these attitudes were a part, they were examined in relation to the adolescents' views of their environment as American Jews and in relation to relevant features of the adolescents' schools and homes.

The study is designed to test the following two hypotheses: (1) that students who are exposed to a more intensive Jewish education tend to be more aware of Israel than those with a lesser exposure; and (2) that children from homes and/or schools with a more markedly Jewish atmosphere tend to feel a stronger tie with Israel. In this analysis, the educational system and the general cultural background of the students' homes are regarded as institutions used by the American Jewish community to maintain its identity and to transmit this identity to the next generation.

The study was conducted during the last two months of the 1964 school year. The subjects were last-year students (twelve to fourteen years old) who attended different types of Jewish schools in New York City. The factors taken into account in selecting the schools were: (1) ideological orientation (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform); (2) extent of Jewish school-

ing offered (gauged by the number of hours per week); and (3) the socio-economic status of the neighborhoods in which the schools were located. The schools were chosen to be as diverse as possible. In the process of selecting the research population, specific procedures were adopted to minimize the possible class differences among the three groups. The following table summarizes the distribution of the research population by ideological orientation and type of school.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH POPULATION BY IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION AND TYPE OF SCHOOL

	Type of School					
	Non-All Day Schools		*All Day*		*Total*	
Ideological Orientation	*No. of Schools*	*No. of Students*	*No. of Schools*	*No. of Students*	*No. of Schools*	*No. of Students*
Orthodox	6	189	5	213	11	402
Conservative	6	174	2	35	8	209
Reform	5	136	—	—	5	136
Yiddish	2	34	—	—	2	34
Total	19	533	7	248	26	781

The major sources of information for the study included: an attitude questionnaire, a "knowledge of Israel" test, and a short intelligence test.[1] In all, 781 questionnaires were administered to 26 groups of students. Additional information was obtained from questionnaires administered to teachers and principals of the groups.

The data collected were constructed into indices measuring both the dependent and independent variables. The indices and correlational analysis were employed in examining the responses. Statistical analysis was carried out on both the group and individual level.

[1] The attitude questionnaire was constructed on the basis of a pilot study utilizing compositions written by a group of eighth graders in Jewish schools in New York.

Findings and Analysis

Attitudes Toward Israel

The Jewish adolescents in this study manifested a feeling of attachment for the state of Israel. On an index composed of four statements expressing closeness to Israel, the mean score of the research population was 2.24 out of a possible high of 4.0. The students also showed some sense of obligation towards Israel, expressed not only in a general feeling of commitment but also in terms of quite specific actions. The mean score of an index of five statements expressing obligation was 3.30 with a possible high score of 5.0. When the results on the indices of closeness and commitment were interrelated ($N = 781$), the correlation was $r = .57$, indicating that feelings of closeness are often accompanied by a sense of obligation.

The subjects were relatively well-informed about Israel. Their mean score on a ten-item test of general knowledge was 7.15 out of a maximum score of 10.0. Their knowledge, however, as well as their image of the country tends to be somewhat selective. On the whole, the students are most aware of those aspects of Israel that are directly related to the country's identity as a Jewish state. That is, the students tend to focus on its peculiarly religio-Judaic attributes rather than on its more general characteristics as one nation among many. About 80 per cent of the total research population knew something about Israel's "Law of Return" and could identify its national flag, language, and anthem.

The significance of these findings should be considered in the light of the fact that the research population—representing for the most part third-generation American Jews—were not directly affected by the Nazi holocaust or by the establishment of the state of Israel. These are youngsters growing up in the free society to which their grandparents had migrated. In view of these circumstances, the attitudes expressed by the research population may be regarded as manifesting a strong though not necessarily traditional identification with Jewish values.[2]

The attitudes of the students were further analyzed in terms of how

[2] This interpretation accords with Hansen's theory regarding the process of revival among third-generation minorities in the United States (Hansen, 1952).

they saw their immediate American Jewish environment. The students' approach to Israel appears to be negatively related to their identity as American Jews. Students with a highly favorable disposition toward Israel tend to have a rather critical view of the position of the Jews in America. Conversely, those who express an intense identification with their Jewish American surroundings tend to feel less strongly attached to Israel. For the total sample ($N = 781$), the correlation between the indices of attachment to Israel and to America was $r = -.31$. When the group mean score is taken as the unit of analysis ($N = 26$), the negative relation becomes stronger, with the new $r = -.68$.

Table 2 summarizes the relationship between individual attitudes toward the Jewish American setting and toward Israel, with the group mean score held constant. On the whole, within each group, the negative relation between American identity and a favorable disposition toward Israel holds. The relationship is strongest among the *low* American identity group ($x^2 = 35.26$ $p < .01$).

In general, it appears that the attitude patterns manifested by the students characterize the particular pattern of Jewish identity they have formed from their experience. That is to say, both the particular form of Jewish American identity that they manifest, and the attachment they express for the state of Israel, constitute supplementary attributes of their Jewish identification.

Specifically, the students who are uncritical of their Jewish American situation tend to be associated with educational backgrounds (in the school and at home) which put relatively less stress on the observance of traditional practices and customs and on the preservation of a distinctly Jewish style of life. Such a background serves to reduce the impact of values that are traditionally Jewish in character, and so would enable individuals to take their identity from the contemporary setting. Further, the student groups that come from such a background also tend to have particularly "liberal" outlooks, which again reflects their receptiveness to American ideals and values.

On the other hand, the student groups that express a certain amount of dissatisfaction with their position as Jews in America tend to be drawn

TABLE 2

ATTITUDES TOWARD JEWISH AMERICAN SURROUNDINGS AND TOWARD ISRAEL IN TERMS OF GROUP APPROACH TO AMERICA

Individual scores on Israel Index	*Group Score on Index of American Identity and Individual Scores on American Index*									
	Low[a]			*Medium*[b]			*High*[b]			
	0-2	3	4-5	0-2	3	4-5	0-2	3	4-5	*Total*
0-1	3(3)	18(17)	33(33)	24(9)	32(24)	32(37)	28(5)	30(19)	44(77)	224
2	25(24)	23(22)	29(29)	24(9)	33(25)	35(41)	28(5)	34(22)	31(56)	233
3-4	72(70)	59(56)	38(38)	52(19)	35(27)	33(38)	44(8)	36(23)	25(45)	324
Total	100(97)	100(95)	100(100)	100(37)	100(76)	100(116)	100(18)	100(64)	100(178)	781

[a] Chi square $p < .01$.

[b] Chi square $p < .05$.

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[b] Chi square $p < .05$.

from homes that either have a strong tradition of ritual observance and/or emphasize Jewish attributes in daily life. Consequently, these groups tend to be highly attached to the state of Israel, which comes to constitute a supplementary component of their Jewishness.

Both these patterns of attachment and commitment serve to cope with the potential discrepancies between American and Jewish value systems. In the latter pattern, the accenting of the uniquely Jewish content (traditional or modern) of an individual's heritage reinforces his sub-cultural identity and equips him with a means of establishing his identity in and with the culture as a whole. But underlying both patterns, it should be noted, is the basic American assumption—at the heart of all the country's sub-cultural educational systems—that the society provides a pluralistic social structure in which each group has a right to be itself.

The analysis also indicates that for the adolescents of this study, the state of Israel is not only a spiritual symbol of the age-old Jewish yearning for Zion. Nor is it merely the Biblical land hallowed by Jewish tradition. For a large portion of the students, Israel performs a further function: it represents a natio-cultural entity with which they can associate themselves. For many, it also symbolizes a place of refuge, a potential homeland. To these youngsters, those positively attached to Israel, their Jewish identification thus extends beyond the political boundaries of their immediate environment and acquires a more distinctly national character. In short, the role played by the state of Israel in the attitude patterns of these Jewish American adolescents is twofold. It augments and enhances their own Jewish identification, and it simultaneously represents a country other than their own with which they can associate themselves and to which (in their thinking) they could go should they wish or need to do so.

It should be clear, then, that the negative correlation between attachment to Israel and attitude toward the situation of American Jews is not necessarily a function of anything as drastic as the subject's disloyalty to America. Rather, allegiance to Israel represents a symbol of identification with contemporary Jewish values in general. The significance attached to Jewishness in education thus can be said to function as an *integrating* force for American Jews. It serves to augment their sense of belonging to a socio-

religious group through which, in turn, they fit more integrally into American society as a whole.

Attitude Patterns and Educational Background

Student attitude patterns were further analyzed in terms of the students' general educational and cultural background. The major conclusion of this analysis can be summarized as follows: the overall cultural climate to which students are exposed both in their home environment and in the formal training of a Jewish school forms the prime influence establishing and reinforcing their outlook as American Jews.

A clear correlation was found between student attitude patterns and the "intensity" of their Jewish education (i.e., amount of Jewish studies per week). "Intensity" is related to a positive approach to Israel and, to a somewhat lesser degree, to a more critical perception of the Jewish American environment. At the same time, there was considerable overlap between the variables of "intensity" and school ideology, and the latter proved to be the more dominant factor in most cases, hence weakening the impact of the "intensity" variable. (This was clearly evident when "intensity" was held constant.)

Tables 3 and 4 present the mean score of the research population on three different indices: attachment to Israel, sense of obligation to Israel, and Jewish American identity. In these tables the variables of ideological

TABLE 3

MEAN DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL (ISRAEL–A) AND OBLIGATION TO ISRAEL (ISRAEL–O) BY IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

	All Schools		*Non-All Day Schools*	
	Israel–A[a]	*Israel–O*[b]	*Israel–A*[a]	*Israel–O*[b]
Total population	2.24	3.30	2.24	3.30
Orthodox	2.52	3.60	2.26	3.38
Conservative	2.22	3.29	2.11	3.20
Reform	1.44	2.55	1.44	2.55

[a] On Israel–A, highest positive attachment is 4.

[b] On Israel–O, highest sense of obligation is 5.

TABLE 4

MEAN DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON JEWISH AMERICAN IDENTITY[a]

	All Schools	*Non-All Day Schools*
Total population	3.36	3.36
Orthodox	3.22	2.94
Conservative	3.40	3.11
Reform	3.75	3.75

[a] This index is a 5 point scale, the highest score, which represents the highest acceptance of the American Jewish situation, being 5.

TABLE 5

CORRELATION BETWEEN TRADITIONALISM OF HOME ENVIRONMENT AND ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL AND JEWISH AMERICAN IDENTITY (N = 26[a])

Home Traditionalism	*Attachment to Israel*	*Jewish American Identity*
Synagogue Attendance	.61[b]	−.53
Holiday Observance	.77	−.76
Kosher Home	.92	−.67

[a] N = number of student classes.

[b] Pearson r's of mean score of classes.

affiliation and intensity of Jewish studies are controlled. Table 5 shows the relationship between the student's home environment, on the one hand, and their attachment to Israel and their American Jewish identity, on the other.

The supposition that student attitudes were related to the ideological orientation of their schools was by and large borne out by the analysis of the data. Tables 3 and 4 show that the total climate of the school, in conjunction with the different ideological outlooks of the Jewish American community, have a bearing on the students' attachment and sense of obligation toward Israel and on their Jewish American identity.[3] If traditionalism is regarded as a continuum extending from Orthodox through Conservative

[3] Only 5 out of the 781 subjects indicated that the "ideological orientation" of their parents was different from the orientation of their school.

to Reform, then a student's attachment to Israel is positively related to the degree of traditionalism to which he is exposed at school and home. A reverse relationship also obtains (though to a rather less marked degree) between traditionalism of background and acceptance of Jewish American identity. Thus, for example, students from Orthodox schools and/or strongly traditionalist home environments tend to express a close bond to Israel; students from Reform schools and/or homes that lay less store by traditional observances tend to manifest a strong identification with the American scene.[4]

The direct influence of the school upon the students was measured by parallel attitude questionnaires administered to both the students and their teachers. The general orientation of the school toward Israel was evaluated by means of a special index measuring the activities in the area initiated by the school. This index was found to be positively associated with the students' *knowledge* of Israel but was not positively associated with their *attitudes* toward Israel or their American Jewish environment.

Of students and teachers, the latter revealed the most extreme sets of attitudes. For example, the mean score of the class groups with the highest rating on attachment to Israel is 2.52; the score of the teachers is 3.03. Again, the lowest mean score of the class groups on the index measuring Jewish American identity is 3.22; the teachers' mean score is 2.95.

Social and Educational Implications

The results of this study appear to have definite educational implications.[5] In the first place, the school was found to have more impact on a

[4] Another factor (for which the data are not included here) helping to shape the students' attitude patterns is their classroom groups. The more positive the Israeli orientation of the group, the more likely individual students will have a positive approach to Israel and a critical view of their Jewish American setting. Similarly, the more positive the Israeli orientation of the group, the more likely individual members will have a higher level of knowledge about Israel.

[5] Concerning Jewish educational aims in general, see, for example, Efron (1954): "As long as educators and teachers do not formulate in their mind a clear cut philosophy for American Jewish living, it is impossible to state with any degree of clarity as to what type of Jewish personality our schools should strive to develop."

student's knowledge of Israel than on his attitudes toward it. Yet the need for establishing a bond with Israel is considered an important goal in the Jewish American educational system. Does this discrepancy mean that educators themselves have not clearly defined the specific content of this broad general objective? Or does it mean that suitable means have not been found to implement it? The problem is exceedingly complex. It involves the entire question of whether and how a formal educational system should foster desirable attitudes among its students.

Secondly, it follows that if Israel is to constitute a meaningful component in the education of the Jewish American student, the subject must be considered in the planning of the entire school program. Once the aims of this subject area are delimited, then a detailed syllabus and the planning of educational methods, extracurricular activities, and special teaching materials should be geared accordingly. It is likely, for example, that the stories, language, and pictures in Hebrew textbooks all have an effect on the image that students acquire of Israel. And this image in turn probably helps shape their attitudes.[6] As Gordon Allport (1954) has remarked: "In teaching values and attitudes it is not deliberately adopted curriculum that is effective, it is rather the obiter dicta, the parenthetical 'little true things' and above all the example of the teacher that count."

Thirdly, the study reveals the strong relationship between the home and school environments and the influence of both on the formation and shaping of the students' attitudes. It shows further that the attitudes of the home are reinforced in the school and that the schoolroom class represents a major frame of reference for the student—a group with which he tends to be at one in expressing his attitudes. These facts, particularly the importance of the classroom, should be taken into consideration by educators in their effort to improve the socialization process of the children in their care.

Finally, the pattern of "Jewish consciousness" that emerged from this study should be of interest to Jewish American educators. If, indeed, a student's Jewishness is composed not only of religious values but also of

[6] For example, if pioneering aspects of Israel's development were related to the history of settlement in America, or the absorption of immigrants into Israel compared with America as a melting pot, modern Israel might acquire a real significance in the students' value system.

a natio-cultural component, and if his attitudes to Israel and to Jewishness in general are related to a perception of his own immediate environment, a basic question suggests itself: what are the specifically Jewish values that Jewish American education is in fact striving for? And how do these values accord with the student's membership in American society?

The central area of concern in this study, the attitudes of Jewish American adolescents toward Israel, admittedly is a very specific one. However, it stems from a general concern raised and examined by such scholars of American ethnic groups as Oscar Handlin and Nathan Glazer: the nature of the pluralism of American society. The issue has been stated as follows by Handlin (1961):

> To some, the perpetuating of group identity seems a stubborn resistance to a democratic program calculated to stress differences and to breed disunity among Americans. To others, the retention of group identification is seen as both necessary and desirable for spiritual self-preservation and self-fulfillment, as well as a source of national enrichment. The perpetuation of group loyalties is, from this point of view, constant with American pattern, neither impeding integration nor endangering national unity.

The present study has dealt with one aspect of this general problem: the extent to which Jewish American adolescents feel at one with their Jewishness and with Jewish values.

A vast range of related issues is clearly open to further and more detailed examination. For example, what is the role played by elements such as a student's peer group in regard to his Jewish identification? What is the precise nature of the contribution of the home to the formation of an adolescent's attitudes? How does a student's Jewish schooling interact with his experience in the formal system of education in general? What are the attitude patterns of Jewish American youngsters who are not exposed to any formal system of Jewish education?

All the above lie outside the scope of the present undertaking. Yet it is hoped that the more general study of the reactions of young people to education in a "cultures in contact" setting may benefit from the findings and analysis presented here.

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